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## SAMUEL, SAUL, DAVID AND SOLOMON.

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## STUDY XIII.—THE PSALMS OF DAVID—SPECIAL TOPICS.\*

1. We have taken up the historical matter of the period of Samuel and David; let us now consider some of the literary product of this period, especially the Psalms.
2. Our previous study of the history will enable us to find for most of the Psalms a connection with that history; our study of the Psalms will give us an insight into the life and times which no external record of events could possibly furnish.
3. After an examination of the Psalms belonging to this age, we shall be in position to form a more correct estimate of the work of David.
4. We shall first consider some of the more important topics which relate to the Psalms as a whole; and after that some of the most interesting and important of the Psalms themselves.

*First Step: The Psalter itself; David's Psalms; Classification.*

1. **The Psalter and its Divisions.**†—(1) Number of Psalms in our English Bible, in Septuagint? (2) Note the division of Psalms into different books; number in each? (3) Study and compare the doxologies at the end of Pss. 41; 72; 89; 106. (4) Meaning of Ps. 72: 20? inferences to be drawn? (5) What light upon the age of this five-fold division is gained from 1 Chron. 16: 35, 36? (6) The times of David, Hezekiah, and the return from exile, the principal periods of Hebrew Psalmody; explanation of this fact?
2. **David's Psalms.**—(1) Number assigned to him in each book? in all? (2) Probability that some have been wrongly assigned him. (3) Various methods of testing whether or not a particular Psalm is to be regarded as Davidic.‡ (4) David's style‡ (a) "terse, vigorous, rapid;" (b) easy, limpid, showing no trace of conscious effort;" (c) "marked by unity of treatment and consecution of thought. (5) David's language, classical, i. e., pure and without the Aramaic forms which characterize the later writers.
3. **Classification of David's Psalms.**¶—(1) Those which seem to have been written in connection with his persecution by Saul, viz., 7; 11; 34(?); 35; 52; 54; 56; 57; 59(?); 142. (2) Those connected with the *removal of the ark* to Jerusalem, viz., 15; 24; 30; 68(?); 101; 132.† Those penned during his *wars*, viz., 2(?); 20; 21; 60(?); 110. (4) Those connected with his *great sin*, viz., 32; 51. (5) Those connected with *Absalom's rebellion*, 3; 4; 23; 26; 27; 28; 37; 62(?); 69; 109.

\* The treatment here given is virtually that of the author, published in *THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDENT*, Vol. VII.

† See Perowne's commentary on Psalms (*Draper*, Andover), vol. I, pp. 4-17; article in Smith's Bible Dictionary, "Psalms;" introductions to various commentaries.

‡ Murray, "Origin and Growth of the Psalms," pp. 133-143.

¶ This classification does not include all Psalms which may lay claim to Davidic authorship only those of which the historical situation is more or less clear.

*Second Step : Hebrew Poetry.*

1. **The Form of Hebrew Poetry.**—(1) Study Pss. 1:2; 21:1,2 (R. V.), and note (a) that each verse has *two lines or members in each of which the same thought is expressed with slight modifications*; (b) that this method of expression, called *parallelism*, is the characteristic feature of Hebrew poetry; and (c) that, wherever, as in these verses, there is practically a repetition of the same idea, the parallelism is called *synonymous* (cf. synonymous words, or synonymous phrases). (2) Study Prov. 10:1-5, and note that, in each verse, the second line or member is in antithesis (contrast) with the first; this is *antithetic parallelism*. (3) Study Pss. 21:3; 25:6; 37:13; 42:1, and note that, in each verse, the first line does not furnish a complete thought, the second being needed to finish out the idea begun in the first; this is *synthetic parallelism*. (4) Study the parallelism of Ps. 15, and note that verses 1 and 2 have each two members, but that verses 3, 4, 5 have each three members. (5) Study Ps. 18:6, and note that (a) the first and second members are synonymous; (b) the third and fourth are synonymous; (c) that the third and fourth, taken together, stand in the synthetic relation with (i. e., are needed to complete the thought of) the first and second. (6) Search in the Psalms for other and similar combinations.
2. **Characteristics of Hebrew Poetry.**\*—(1) *Religious*: (a) the Hebrews were a religious nation, (b) religion finds its best expression in song, (c) the fact that it is religious has given Hebrew poetry its pre-eminence over all other poetry. (2) *Simple and Natural*: (a) Hebrew poetry is largely free from artificial limitations; (b) the distinction between poetry and the style of prose is slight; (c) "among the Hebrews all thought stands in immediate contact with living impressions and feelings, and so, if incapable of rising to the abstract, is prevented from sinking to the unreal" (Robertson Smith). (3) *Largely Subjective*: (a) the Hebrew poet writes of himself, out of himself, and for himself; (b) that which is outside is taken up because of its relation to what is within; (c) "Man's inmost soul and all the vast variety of human experience, are presented in Hebrew poetry as the common experience of humanity of all ages and of all lands." (4) *Sententious*: (a) brief, terse, loosely connected; (b) uttered as intuitions rather than as products of logical reflection; (c) the parts of a poem not always clearly distinguished; (d) figures of speech extravagant in number, variety and character. (5) *Realistic*: (a) Hebrew poets in close communion with nature; (b) all nature aglow with the glory of God; (c) all nature sharing in the destiny of man; (d) "Hebrew poetry, therefore, excels all other poetry in its faithfulness to nature, its vividness and graphic power, its intense admiration of the beauties of nature, and reverence for its sublimities."

*Third Step : The Superscriptions.*

1. **The Superscriptions.**—(1) What proportion of Psalms have superscriptions? (2) In which books of the Psalms are superscriptions more abundant? (3) Classify the superscriptions of the first and second books (1-41, 42-72) under the following heads: (a) authorship; (b) musical terms; (c) circumstances of writing. (4) What is meant by "for the chief musician"? (5) The authority of the superscriptions: (a) their evident antiquity (older than Septuagint; cf. also 1 Chron. 15:20, 21); (b) the fact that in the Hebrew they are a part of the Psalm; (c) their general agreement with the contents; (d) the fact that they are prefixed not indiscriminately, but seemingly with great care. (6) Considerations opposing the authority of the superscriptions: (a) disagreement of MSS. and versions (Septuagint and Syriac); (b) superscriptions in some cases contradicted by contents; (c) only the names of a few authors are given, when probably there were many; (d) superscriptions concerning the circumstances of composition are given only in David's

\* Taken from Briggs' "Biblical Study," pp. 250-256.

Psalms; why not in others? (7) In view of these considerations, how may the superscriptions be supposed to have arisen, and what in general, is their value?

*Fourth Step: Contents and Purpose; Authorship.*

1. **Authorship.**\*—(1) *David*; number of his Psalms, and in what books? (2) *Sons of Korah*; (a) who were they? (b) number of Psalms? (c) what representation of God do these furnish (44:4; 47:2, 6, 7; 84:3; 45:6)? (d) representation of Jerusalem (cf. Pss. 46; 47; 48; 87)? (e) the principal ideas characteristic of these Psalms? (f) what divine name is commonly used? (3) *Asaph*; (a) who was he? (1 Chron. 16:5); 15:17-21); (b) number? (c) representation of God (cf. 50; 75; 76; 82; and differently, 74:1; 77:20; 78:52, 71, 72; 79:13; 80:1)? (d) use of divine names? (4) *Ethan* (cf. 89). (5) *Solomon* (cf. 72 and 127). (6) *Moses* (cf. 90).
2. **Classification of Psalms according to Contents and Purpose.**†—(1) *Historical*; study Pss. 106; 44; 46; 60; 78, noting (a) the stand-point from which they are written, (b) the spirit and purpose, (c) the elements characterizing the national songs of other peoples which these lack. (2) *Personal*; study Pss. 3; 4; 5; 35, noting (a) the circumstances under which they were written, (b) the various phases of feeling to which they give utterance, (c) the underlying principle applicable to individuals of all times. (3) *Liturgical*; study Pss. 150; 24; 95; 96; 190, noting (a) the evident purpose of these Psalms, (b) their characteristic features, (c) relation sustained to them by modern hymns. (4) *Psalms of Adoration*; study Pss. 65; 8; 19; 50; 90; 104, noting (a) the attributes of God which are celebrated, (b) the breadth and scope of doctrinal statement, (c) the simplicity and grandeur; (d) distinguish between these Psalms and those classified as *liturgical*. (5) *Devotional*; study Pss. 23; 40; 42; 63; 110, as representative of this class noting (a) the recital of spiritual experience, (b) the importance attached to the condition of the heart, (c) the longing for communion with or light from God; (d) the attitude assumed towards God's Word; (e) the characteristic features of other classes of Psalms which appear also in this class. (6) *Didactic or Meditative*; study Pss. 1; 15; 37; 101; 133; 139, as representatives of this class, noting (a) the general tone and spirit, (b) the tendency to compare the lot of the wicked with that of the righteous, (c) the lack of the real poetical element; (d) select Psalms of the classes already cited which might also be included in this division. (7) *Messianic*; study Pss. 2; 16; 22; 72, 110, as representatives of this class, noting (a) the historical basis, (b) the principle of the type therein illustrated, (c) the New Testament use of such Psalms, (d) the complete fulfillment in the Messianic kingdom. (8) So far as possible, classify the entire Psalter under these heads.

*Fifth Step: Use of the Psalms in the New Testament.*

1. Study Ps. 2: 1, 2, noting (a) the meaning of the passage if interpreted of David or Solomon, viz: *A great rebellion against an authorized ruler*; (b) the meaning taken in Acts 4:25-28, viz: *Hostility to Christ of Herod and Pilate*; (c) the principle in accordance with which both these interpretations may be

\* See articles in Smith's Bible Dictionary, *Korah*, *Asaph*, etc.; also Perowne's Commentary on Psalms, pp. 92 seq., and introductions to all commentaries.

† See Isaac Taylor's "Spirit of Hebrew Poetry," ch. ix. (a most instructive treatment).

- accepted as correct, i. e., *the type* ; (d) the testimony of Acts 2 : 25, in reference to the author and the source of the Psalm.
2. Study Ps. 22 : 1, noting (a) its meaning in the mouth of David (or Jeremiah) ; what kind of a cry ? (b) the use made of it by the Saviour, Matt. 27 : 46 ; Mark 15 : 34 ; (c) the explanation of this latter usage.
  3. Study Ps. 91 : 11, 12, noting (a) the natural meaning of the passage in its connection, (b) the application made in Matt. 4 : 6 ; Luke 4 : 10, 11 ; (c) the principle underlying this application.
  4. Compare in the same way the following : (a) Ps. 8 : 5-7 with Heb. 2 : 6-8 ; (b) Ps. 16 : 8-11 with Acts 2 : 25-28, 31 ; Ps. 110 : 1 with Matt. 22 : 44 ; Mark 12 : 36 ; Luke 20 : 42, 43 ; Acts 2 : 34, 35 ; 1 Cor. 15 : 25, 27 ; Heb. 1 : 13 ; (c) Ps. 22 : 18 with John 19 : 24 ; (d) Ps. 69 : 4 with John 15 : 25.
  5. On the ground of these passages, and others with which you are familiar, formulate two or three principles in accordance with which a large proportion of the quotations may be explained.
  6. As a matter of fact, the New Testament quotation often varies in form from the Hebrew, or the Septuagint, or both ; how is this to be explained ?

#### STUDY XIV.—THE PSALMS OF DAVID—FIRST PERIOD.

- Remarks :** 1. The Psalms of this period belong strictly to the period of history covered in 1 Samuel ; they are considered, however, in this connection in order to preserve the unity of treatment.
2. It must be remembered that the tests by which a given Psalm is determined to be Davidic are largely subjective, and therefore more or less unsatisfactory.

##### *First Step : The Various Psalms of the Period.*

Read carefully Pss. 7 ; 52 ; 54 ; 56 ; 57 ; 142, and make notes under the following heads :

1. The circumstances under which the Psalms seem (or claim) to have been written (see superscriptions).
2. Expressions which they have in common.
3. Phases of feeling to which they give utterance ; or elements in the character of the writer which they exhibit, e. g., 7 : 1, 10, 17 ; 54 : 4, 6.
4. Expressions showing the writer's ideas concerning God, God's relation to man, 7 : 8, 9, 11 ; 52 : 1 ; 54 : 7 ; 56 : 8.
5. Expressions showing the writer's ideas concerning his own relation to his fellow men, or their relation to him, e. g., 7 : 2, 15, 16 ; 52 : 1, 7, 8 ; 57 : 3 ; 56 : 2, 5, 6.
6. Sentiments which would oppose the Davidic authorship of any one of these Psalms.

##### *Second Step : Psalm 56, Special Expressions and Parallelism.*

Take up exhaustively Ps. 56\* and treat as follows :

1. Read the Psalm carefully two or three times, and mark every expression which seems to need explanation, and by means of such helps as are within reach determine its force ; e. g., (v. 1) "*swallow me up*," "*all the day long* ;" (v. 2) "*fight proudly* ;" (v. 4) "*in God I will praise*," "*flesh* ;" (v. 5) "*wrest my*

\* Consult the various commentaries.